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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

PHOTO BY TOM DUNHAM

MEN TOO CAN NURTURE

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, and color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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EDITORIAL

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER'S ANNIVERSARY . . .

NOW MORE THAN EVER

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER was incorporated on June 5, 1950. Thus, as you receive your copy of this issue, the Fellowship enters its thirty-first year, not just miraculously alive but healthy and vigorous, even, and still growing, with its purpose the same as it was at the beginning. After thirty years, we believe prayer is still the answer.

In the period following the Second World War, you may recall, there was a general sense of urgency about finding an answer to the difficulties, dangers, and anxieties of the world. From this sense grew Wendell Willkie's famous idea of "one world," the World Council of Churches, the United Nations, and many lesser-known enterprises, including Fellowship in Prayer, which literally began in December of 1949 with an ad in *The New York Times* stating in as large a type as we could afford that to the debate over control of the atomic bomb "prayer is the answer."

Then as now. The only difference seems to be that the urgency has vanished and been replaced by glum, grim acceptance of what our sentries on mass media refer to as "the realities of modern life," that is to say, the revolution in Iran, the problem of inflation, as well as smaller and more local disasters that are relayed to us daily in full detail. They are so many and (usually) so insoluble that accept them and live with them is all we can do. We do it. But it makes for a glum, grim existence in which we put up with the discomfort and the boredom and wait mainly to see if we are going to survive or not: like Londoners in the subways during the bombings.

It's not a good time—the only one in our memory in which there have been few great men or women in any field, politics, literature, the arts, religion, to admire and love and turn to for wisdom.

It is a time, in short, in which we have no recourse but to turn away from the tedious, gray landscape surrounding us to the less familiar but far more attractive scenery of the spirit. There at least there is something to interest us, to suggest meanings, to provide fortitude, to promote creativity, hope, love, and the other essentials of human survival.

The acquisition of these precious things is, we know, something we must manage by and for ourselves. Only when we know this and do it are we capable of achieving that state of health—physical, emotional, and spiritual—which, always joyous, annuls our discouragement and sense of futility and centers us on the real reality of our existences. When we can accomplish this, moreover, we discover that not only are we all right but the world is also, tiresome and without solution though it appears to be. This is a side-benefit most of us do not anticipate from our struggles with ourselves.

As we tend ourselves, it appears, we tend others, we honor the responsibilities laid on us by the past, we promote the flourishing of the future. Each of us in his own way tends the growth and development of the human spirit. Indeed, as suggested by the quotation from Jung at the bottom of this page, by tending to ourselves we serve the Almighty.

It is most people's experience that change is both inevitable and necessary, that peace comes only in the moment after one change has been made and the next is not yet apparent. Most of us cannot make changes until we have to, until, to tell the truth, the pain of not making them hurts more than making them. Nevertheless, by some spiritual law that governs our natures, we go on making them when we have to. For the majority of us the desirability of changes and our capacity (our willingness) to make them are often the subject of our prayers. In our prayers we learn the need and find the courage and, when the time comes, do what has to be done as though we were individuals much better than we actually are: much less troubled and confused, much smarter, stronger, and firmer. By this agency we contribute despite ourselves to the evolvement of a world much better than the one we happen to be living in.

It is this power which Fellowship in Prayer was founded to assist you in summoning. It works. Knowing this, we can say after thirty years that we plan to go on with it—that it is still the answer—and that we need it now more than ever.

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"I am neither spurred on by excessive optimism nor in love with high ideals, but am merely concerned with the fate of the individual human being—that infinitesimal unit on whom the fate of the world depends and in whom, if we read the meaning of the Christian message aright, even God seeks his goal."

—C.G. JUNG

The Baha'i Faith

by DANIEL KELLER

The Baha'i Faith had its beginnings in 1844 in Persia, where a young man called the Bab (or The Gate or Forerunner) declared he had a new message revealed to him by God. Although his purpose was to proclaim the coming of one far greater than himself, he also founded an independent religion called the Babi Faith, which would prepare people for the coming prophet. After a turbulent period when his followers were persecuted by members of the prevailing Islamic religion, the Bab was martyred in 1850. Before this, he had

revealed many tablets, prayers, and laws concerning the way of life to be followed by his adherents.

To carry on the faith a new leader came to the forefront by the name of Baha'ullah (or the Glory of God). Imprisoned or exiled for forty years, he declared in 1863 that he was the prophet proclaimed by the Bab. His tablets, prayers, and laws filled hundreds of volumes. They constitute the holy writings of the faith. Many remain to be translated from the original Persian or Arabic.

With his passing in 1892, revelation from God came to an end. But Baha'ullah's will appointed his eldest son Abdul-Baha (or Servant of the Glory of God) to oversee the infant faith. Abdul-Baha's purpose was to interpret or explain the holy writings to followers practicing the faith and its way of life. He also was the Perfect Example of that way of life, the model after whom every Baha'i would strive to pattern his or her self. He too was put in prison from time to time, but travelled to many parts of the world, including the U.S. in 1912.

His will outlined the workings of the administration which operates today. He appointed his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to be Guardian of the Faith—to protect it from dissension from both outside and inside.

Some of the major beliefs of the Baha'i faith are: there is only one God; the unity of mankind; the equality of men and women; the agreement of religion and science; the elimination of prejudice; the common foundation of all religions; and world peace under a world government.

Abdul-Baha (Servant of the Glory) was son of prophet Baha'ullah.

BAHA'I PRAYER

"Prayer," says Abdul-Baha, "is conversation with God." In order that God may make known His Mind and Will to men, He must speak to them in a language which they can understand, and this He does by the mouths of His holy prophets. While these prophets are alive in the body, they speak with men face to face and convey to them the message of God, and after their deaths their message continues to reach men's minds through their recorded sayings and writings. But this is not the only way in which God can speak with men. There is a "language of the spirit," which is independent of speech or writing, by which God can commune with and inspire those whose hearts are seeking after truth, wherever they are, and whatever their native race or tongue. By this language the manifestation continues to hold converse with the faith after his departure from the material world. Christ continued to converse with and inspire His disciples after His crucifixion. In fact He influenced them more powerfully than before; and with other prophets it has been the same.

Abdul-Baha speaks much of this spiritual language. He says, for instance: "We should speak in the language of heaven—in the language of the spirit—for there is a language of the spirit and heart. It is as different from our language as our own language is different from that of the animals, who express themselves only by cries and sounds. It is the language of the spirit which speaks to God. When, in prayer, we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we hear the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and hear the answer."

Baha'ullah declares that the higher spiritual truths can be communicated only by means of this spiritual language. The spoken or written word is quite inadequate. In a little book called *The Seven Valleys*, in which he describes the journey of travelers from the earthly dwelling to the Divine Home, he says, in speaking of the more advanced stages of the journey: "The tongue is unable to give an account of these, and utterance falls exceedingly short. The pen is useless in this court, and the ink gives no result but blackness . . . . Heart alone can communicate to heart the state of the knower; this is not the work of a messenger, nor can it be contained in letters."

In order that we may attain the spiritual condition in which conversation with God becomes possible, Abdul-Baha says: "We must strive to attain to that condition by being separated from all things and from the people of the world and by turning to God alone. It will take some effort on the part of man to attain to that condition, but he must work for it, strive for it. We can attain to it by thinking and caring less for material things and more for the spiritual. The further we go from the one, the nearer we are to the other. The choice is ours . . . ."

Baha'ullah has written: "Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of

self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. Remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement, could ye but perceive it."

According to Abdul-Baha: "A mediator is necessary between man and the Creator—one who receives the full light of the Divine Splendor and radiates it over the human world, as the earth's atmosphere receives and diffuses the sun's rays."

"If we wish to pray, we must have some object on which to concentrate. If we turn to God, we must direct our hearts to a certain center. If man worships God otherwise than through His manifestation, he must first form a conception of God, and that conception is created by his own mind. As the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, so God is not to be comprehended in this fashion. That which man conceives with his own mind he comprehends. That which he can comprehend is not God. The conception of God which a man forms for himself is but a phantom, an image, an imagination, an illusion. There is no connection between such a conception and the Supreme Being."

"If a man wishes to know God, he must find Him in the perfect mirror, Christ or Baha'ullah. In either of these mirrors he will see reflected the Sun of Divinity."

"As we know the physical sun by its splendor, by its light and heat, so we know God, the spiritual sun, when He shines forth from the temple of manifestation, by His attributes of perfection, by the beauty of His qualities and by the splendor of His light."

Again: "A man who tries to worship God without turning to His manifestation is like a man in a dungeon trying through his imagination to revel in the glories of the sunshine."

The use of prayer is enjoined upon Baha'is in no uncertain terms. Baha'ullah says: "Chant (or recite) the Words of God every morning and evening. The one who neglects this has not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His agreement, and he who turns away from it today is of those who have turned away from God. Fear God, O my people. Let not too much reading (of the Sacred Word) and actions by day or night make you proud. To chant but one verse with joy and gladness is better for you than reading all the Revelations of the Omnipotent God with carelessness. Chant the Tablets of God in such measure that ye be not overtaken with fatigue and depression. Burden not the soul so as to cause exhaustion and languor, but rather refresh it that thus it may soar on the wings of Revelation to the dawning-place of proofs. This brings you nearer to God, were ye of those who understand."

Abdul-Baha says to a correspondent: "O thou spiritual friend! Know thou that prayer is indispensable and obligatory, and man under no pretext whatever is excused therefrom unless he be mentally unsound or an insurmountable obstacle prevents him."

Another correspondent asked: "Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof, for God has established everything and executes all affairs after the best order—therefore, what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and in stating one's wants and seeking help?"

Abdul-Baha replied: "Know thou, verily, it is becoming in a weak one to supplicate to the Strong One, and it behooveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the Glorious Bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His Ocean, this supplication brings light to his heart, illumination to his sight, life to his soul, and exaltation to his being."

"During thy supplications to God and thy reciting, 'Thy Name is my healing,' consider how thine heart is cheered, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the love of God, and thy mind attracted to the Kingdom of God! By these attractions one's ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is enlarged the water increases, and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one's wants."

Only in the case of the Prayer for the Dead has Baha'ullah commanded congregational prayer, and the only requirement is that the believer who reads it aloud, and all others present, should stand. This differs from the Islamic practice of congregational prayer in which the believers stand in rows behind an imam, who leads the prayer, which is prohibited in the Baha'i Faith.

These ordinances, which are in accordance with Baha'ullah's abolition of professional clergy, do not mean that He attached no value to meetings for worship. Regarding the value of gathering for prayer, Abdul-Baha spoke as follows: ". . . Where many are gathered together their force is greater. Separate soldiers fighting alone and individually have not the force of a united army. If all the soldiers in this spiritual war gather together, then their united spiritual feelings help each other, and their prayers become acceptable."

To someone who asked whether prayer was necessary, since presumably God knows the wishes of all hearts, Abdul-Baha replied: "If one friend loves another, is it not natural that he should wish to say so? Though he knows that that friend is aware of his love, does he not still wish to tell him of it? . . . It is true that God knows the wishes of all hearts; but the impulse to pray is a natural one, springing from man's love of God."

In another talk he said: "In the highest prayer, men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear Him or hell, or hope for bounty or heaven . . . . When a man falls in love with a human being, it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficulty is it to keep from mentioning the Name of God when one has come to love Him? . . . The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God."

According to the teachings of the prophets, disease and all other forms of calamity are due to disobedience to the Divine Commands. Even disasters due

to floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes are attributed by Abdul-Baha indirectly to this cause: "Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance; they are sent by the Divine Mercy for our perfecting. When grief and sorrow come, then will a man remember his Father Who is in Heaven, Who is able to deliver him from his humiliations. The more a man is chastened, the greater is the harvest of spiritual values shown forth by him."

Many find a difficulty in believing in the efficacy of prayer because they think that answers to prayer would involve arbitrary interference with the laws of nature. An analogy may help to remove this difficulty. If a magnet be held over some iron filings, the latter will fly upwards and cling to it, but this involves no interference with the law of gravitation. The force of gravity continues to act on the filings just as before. What has happened is that a superior force has been brought into play—another force whose action is just as regular and calculable as that of gravity. The Baha'i view is that prayer brings into action higher forces, as yet comparatively little known; but there seems no reason to believe that these forces are more arbitrary in their action than the physical forces. The difference is that they have not yet been fully studied and experimentally investigated, and their action appears mysterious and incalculable because of our ignorance.

Another difficulty which some find perplexing is that prayer seems too feeble a force to produce the great results often claimed for it. Analogy may serve to clear up this difficulty also. A small force, when applied to the sluice gate of a reservoir, may release and regulate an enormous flow of waterpower, or, when applied to the steering gear of an ocean liner, may control the course of the huge vessel. In the Baha'i view, the power that brings about answers to prayer is the inexhaustible Power of God. The part of the suppliant is only to exert the feeble force necessary to release the flow or determine the course of the Divine Bounty, which is ever ready to serve those who have learned how to draw upon it.

Baha'ullah teaches that one's whole life should be a prayer, that work done in the right spirit is worship, that every thought, word and deed devoted to the Glory of God and the good of one's fellows is prayer, in the truest sense of the word.

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From BAHA'ULLAH AND THE NEW ERA by J.E. Esslemont. ©1976 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

Dean Lewis Mudge of McCormick Seminary chairs COCU gathering.

Bringing People Together

by JANET HARBISON PENFIELD

A big, ruggedly handsome, whitehaired man with an amiable expression stands at a microphone while on the floor of the meeting men and women of a variety of ages, colors, and regional backgrounds (judging from their speech), offer amendments to a document that may influence the shape of American Protestantism for a long time to come.

The man is Lewis Mudge, who, "in real life," as he often says in identifying himself, is dean of McCormick (Presbyterian) Theological Seminary in Chicago. Right now, he is acting in his capacity as chair of the Theology Commission of the Consultation on Church Union. The Consultation is a gathering of representatives of ten major mainline American Protestant denominations. Periodically, the rumor is that the Consultation is dead or at least somnolent.

Not so. The impulse toward union of this group of churches, which has numbered as many as ten denominations and as few as six, continues to beat strongly twenty years after it took form in the vision of another Presbyterian

minister. He is Eugene Carson Blake, who preached a sermon in December, 1960, outlining his view that God intended all people to be one and that, for starters, Protestants in America, who were pretty well in accord on basic questions of faith and style of worship anyhow, and all English-speaking, should make one more try at getting together. The idea was not to create a super-organization on the model of huge corporations, but to show an unbelieving world that these Christians really do love one another, can pray together, can hold their most sacred ceremonials (baptism and the Lord's Supper) together, can recognize the leadership of the same called and appointed people.

This might not seem to be asking a lot. But years of struggle have shown that people do not change easily when it comes to how and with whom they pray. And then the atmosphere in the world of faith has changed drastically in twenty years. Women, people with dark skins, poor nations, the handicapped, the dispossessed of all the world have been demanding their share of God's bounty. A white, male-dominated community of faith might have seemed feasible in 1960. In the 1980's, it won't do. Clearly symbolic of these developments are the facts that there are now three predominantly black denominations in the Consultation, and that an ordained woman is the president who conducted the meeting in Cincinnati last January where Lewis Mudge presented the work of his group on "ministry."

Since not all the denominations in COCU (as the Consultation has come to be called) have bishops, not all have comparable forms of participation of lay people in their governing structures, not all have the same view of the requirements for an ordained ministry, the task of his committee was tricky.

Some years before, COCU considered—and was not quite happy with—a section on ministry designed to be the capstone of its compilation of agreements on basic beliefs of these Christian groups. Chapters on faith, worship, sacraments got easier agreement. Then, not quite a year ago, the theology group brought out a proposed document on ministry, including some questions that still seemed unresolved. Better, the COCU delegates felt. Would the theology commission make one more try?

So now, on the final afternoon of the final day of a session especially called to consider a new draft on ministry, Lewis Mudge stands patiently, alertly, unhurriedly listening to proposed amendments, indicating places in the new draft where the proposals were already covered, consulting his colleagues on the commission ranged on the platform behind him.

Mudge has had ideal preparation for this role. Scarcely through college and seminary (with a time at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar), he was a teacher and chaplain at Amherst College, where he chaired a committee on the "theology of the call" and was the first person to chair the Vocation Agency of his denomination. "Some of my colleagues at Amherst thought I was crazy to leave beautiful New England and move to the south side of Chicago which they pictured as full of garbage and rusty metal." These colleagues had not

realized that all along Mudge had been taking part in the molding of ministers, even before he formally became dean of a seminary. "After fourteen years at Amherst, I was afraid I might be in danger of turning into a Mr. Chips."

Those who have observed him over the years never worried about his getting in a rut. "I have always liked to do several things at once," he says. And: "I am one of those people who get satisfaction out of bringing people together to work something out."

Even as dean, Mudge continues to teach a couple of courses a year in the history of Christian thought. He finds the best of his seminary students as good as the best of those he knew in Amherst. "Only the dropoff is faster," he observes. There is definitely a difference in the way students approach the study of religion in college and seminary; in seminary, they do more sustained work on a given topic. "You can be sure that what you are teaching will be built upon and used. The students are not taking your course just for their own entertainment."

Taking a course of Mudge's can be fun, though. His slow, measured speech gives hearers time to savor his wit and follow the fresh and graceful thought underneath.

On spiritual discipline—a topic of lively interest today—he observes that though chapels are once again filled, and retreats are booming, this is not the whole answer: the Protestant ethic of "worldly asceticism" needs to be reclaimed. Surely it did run to excesses (one thinks of seventy-two-hour work weeks and rich recluses). "Nowadays it is mostly rejected—but it *is* a spiritual discipline."

"In fact, the very attempt to articulate one's faith responsibly is a form of spiritual discipline. Public prayers, sermons—all can be a form of spiritual discipline."

There is a silence in the meeting room. There are no more lines of people waiting at microphones to make amendments. The Consultation moves to accept the chapter on ministry to send to the denominations. Everyone stands. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" resounds through the hall.

There is a storm of applause for Lewis Mudge. He redirects it to his committee and to the assembled delegates. For if something has happened here today, it is mainly the doing of the Holy Spirit, working through all the women and men there—but maybe mostly through Lewis Mudge.

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It is one thing or the other: either death, hanging over all of us, has power over us and can divide us and deprive us of the blessing of love; or there is no death, there is only a series of changes, consummated in us all . . . ."

—Leo Tolstoy in his diary

NEW WORLD DICTIONARY: *HINDUISM a hymn or portion of text, esp. from the Veda, chanted or intoned as an incantation or prayer.*

MANTRAS

FOUNDATIONS OF TIBETAN MYSTICISM (by Lama Anagarika Govinda): *In the case of mantric symbols, the subtle variations of sound play a very important role . . . . The secret of this hidden power of sound or vibration, which forms the key to the riddles of creation and of creativeness, as it reveals the nature of things and of the phenomena of life, had been well understood by the seers of olden times: the Rishis who inhabited the slopes of the Himalayas, the Magi of Iran, the adepts of Mesopotamia, the priests of Egypt, and the mystics of Greece . . . . Pythagoras, who himself was an initiate of Eastern wisdom and who was the founder of one of the most influential schools of mystic philosophy in the West, spoke of the "Harmony of Spheres," according to which each celestial body—in fact, each and every atom—produced a particular sound on account of its movement, its rhythm or vibration.*

The idea of creative sound was continued in the teachings of the logos, which were partly absorbed by early Christianity, as we can see from the Gospel of St John, which begins with the mysterious words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . . And the Word was made flesh . . . ."

The superstition that the efficacy of a mantra depends on its intonation is mainly due to the superficial 'vibration-theory' of pseudo-scientific dilettanti, who confused the effects of spiritual vibrations or forces with those of physical sound-waves. If the efficacy of mantras depended on their correct pronunciation, then all mantras in Tibet would have lost their meaning and power . . . .

This means that the power and the effect of a mantra depend on the spiritual attitude, the knowledge and the responsiveness of the individual. The sabda or sound of the mantra is not a physical one (though it may be accompanied by such a one) but a spiritual one. It cannot be heard by the ears but only by the heart, and it cannot be uttered by the mouth but only by the mind. The mantra has power and meaning only for the initiated.

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THE JESUS PRAYER As A Mantra

by MIRIAM MURPHY

THIS PRAYER should appeal to all maturing Christians, particularly those who have been exposed to oriental meditation, to Transcendental Meditation (TM) and its mantras, the inner vibrations of which are meant to raise the level of consciousness. For those who would like to practice meditation in the context of Christianity, there is no better way than through the Jesus Prayer. It is a prayer which can be used by all those interested in nurturing life in their growth center and for whom this prayer holds an appeal.

The Jesus Prayer is also for those who would like a form, but want their prayer life to be more than form. For as you will see after a while the form vanishes as this prayer becomes a way of life. The Jesus Prayer is for those who would like to blend a life of prayer with a life of action, for those who would

like "to pray without ceasing" effortlessly. It is for those who are biblical in their orientation and may hold suspect any form of prayer not based on Scripture. No sounder scriptural prayer can be found than the use of the name of Jesus.

Probing Your Spiritual Roots

The Jesus Prayer is one of the most profound prayers in the history of Christianity, dating back to apostolic times. The original writings from the Greek Fathers of the church about this prayer are to be found in five volumes preserved in the monasteries of Mt. Athos in Greece. There is a short version in English called *The Philokalia.* Some persons enjoy reading *The Way of the Pilgrim,* an allegory which gives an account of a pilgrim seeking to learn the meaning of Paul's words "pray without ceasing." Eventually the pilgrim finds a monk who teaches him the Jesus Prayer. Since early Christian times, a way of life founded on the Jesus Prayer prevailed in Eastern monasteries; it was known Hesychasm.

The Jesus Prayer is a form of meditation. Although the practice of meditation has always been present in Christianity, the objectives at different periods have not always been the same. Nor has the same weight been given to meditation in Western Christianity as is given to it in Hinduism and Buddhism.

In Hinduism and Buddhism, and indeed among the Sufis of Islam, the chief object of the spiritual exercise of meditation is the deliberate raising and enlargement of consciousness for the purpose of enlightenment. In Christianity, on the other hand, there has been a tendency, particularly since the sixteenth century, to judge the value of meditation in terms of growth in virtue. Spiritual directors and writers on meditation frowned on any spiritual exercise whose goal was to produce a mystical state of mind or which deliberately enabled the meditator to move into a state of contemplation. If God leads you into such a state, well and good. But this state must not be sought or expected.

This particular bias, however, has not been characteristic of all periods of Christian history. Nor is it universal. For instance, Eastern theologians and spiritual directors of the early Christian church considered the objective of spiritual exercises to be "illumination" and "deification." They believed that by means of spiritual exercises these states could be reached. We can view the goal of the Jesus Prayer in this light also.

Besides these objectives, the Jesus Prayer, the Prayer of the Heart, typical of the deepest meditational practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church, has as its goal that enlargement and elevation of spiritual consciousness which is characteristic of Hindu and Buddhist meditation.

The Jesus Prayer As a Mantra

Although the mantra is extensively used and occupies an important place in the spiritual exercises of Hinduism and Buddhism and is practiced in the Eastern

Orthodox Church in the Prayer of Jesus, it has not been emphasized in the spiritual exercises of the Western church. That is not to say that mantras have not been used, but only that they have not been generally understood as a prayer form. For instance, take our use of the Greek "Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy," used for centuries in the eucharistic celebration or the rosary recited by Roman Catholics. The mantra is recommended as an aid to contemplation in that ancient medieval classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing.* So, what is a mantra?

1) It is a word, a phrase, or a sentence which keeps your mind from wandering and encourages recollection. 2) It is a prayer form, a microcosm of an eternal reality, which you may wish to contemplate; or it is used to awaken dormant forces in your soul, to establish contact with your depth consciousness, or as a means of doing what Paul advises, stir up the spirit within. 3) It is also an auditory stimulus, the repetition of which awakens the latent consciousness as music does.

How to Practice the Jesus Prayer

The Jesus Prayer is suited to the beginner as well as the most mature Christian. It is adaptable to every phase of the maturing process as you grow in your relational faith from communication to communion.

1. It begins with the continual repetition of the name of Jesus aloud, in a place where you can be alone. Repeating the prayer aloud is regarded as a means of acquiring the habit and of conditioning the body.

2. The Jesus Prayer is then repeated silently, slowly, and deliberately all during the day. Silent repetition is a means of acquiring concentration. At this stage the prayer becomes reflective.

3. Next, the Jesus Prayer is accommodated to the breathing processes of inhaling and exhaling by rhythmically breathing the name of Jesus.

4. When the habit of concentration has been acquired, it is then possible to take the prayer down into the heart where it lives of itself, with every breath and heartbeat.

5. At this final stage, the saying of the prayer to the beats of the heart is first visualized and then listened to as the words are breathed. The blending of your breathing and heartbeat can bring about a unity of being which will have a transforming effect on your whole life.

6. Eventually, the prayer will repeat itself, and the mind will be half-conscious of it going on even while you are busy with many things. This prayer begins in solitude and silence but can later be taken into the marketplace when it begins to live with every heartbeat.

As described above, the Jesus Prayer effects a union of mind and heart. It is a prayer that moves us from the head center to the heart center of being. What was first understood intellectually is now understood intuitively, and so the prayer of Jesus becomes an instrument in the transformation of the whole being.

A monk of the Orthodox Church suggests that in using the name of Jesus, the approach should be gentle, easy, and graceful as a bird that sails in the sky, beating its wings only from time to time. You should rest in the Lord and resume the Jesus mantra when thoughts threaten. He warns that not everyone should use this prayer form, but only those attracted to it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and only if it produces an increase of love and peace. The Jesus Prayer can take many forms; what is important is that the name of Jesus be the center of the prayer. In the East, the most common form is, "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner." The simple use of the name of Jesus alone, however, is the most ancient form.

Nurturing Maturity Through the Jesus Prayer

The Jesus Prayer can be used at all stages of the spiritual growth process from communication to communion. When you identify with Jesus in your growth center, through the use of his name, you are nurturing your inward relational faith. The use of the name of Jesus has a purifying effect on your spirit and penetrates you like a drop of oil penetrating a cloth. It becomes a source of strength to paralyze the forces of evil and to overcome the law of sin.

The use of the name of Jesus can bring about a focal awakening to the reality of his presence in your growth center. As you reverently worship Jesus, the use of his name is a means of healing and forgiveness. It is a filter through which your thoughts, words, and deeds pass and are freed from impurities.

We pronounce the name of Jesus so that he may more fully dwell in our hearts. As we meditate, the inner reality of his name will pass into the depths of our growth center, and we will more fully realize that growing in loving communication to intimate communion is our call as Christians.

In this special way we begin to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the living content of the name of Jesus which enters us physically, like an ointment poured forth over the body.

The Jesus Prayer integrates the whole of our life around the central reality of God's love and presence. It simplifies and unifies our maturing spiritual life because the power of the Word is there to do it. The divided personality which said "my name is legion" will recover wholeness in the sacred name: "unite my heart to fear thy name."

From PRAYER IN ACTION, A Growth Experience, by Miriam Murphy. © 1979 by Abingdon, Nashville, Tennessee. Used by permission.

THE GOLDEN RULE

THE Golden Rule obviously concerns itself with one of the very basic paradoxes of human existence. Each man calls his own a separate body, a self-conscious individuality, a personal awareness of the cosmos, and a certain death; and yet he shares this world as a *reality* also perceived and judged by others and as an *actuality* within which he must commit himself to ceaseless interaction. This is acknowledged in your scriptures as the principle of Karma.

To identify self-interest and the interest of other selves, the Rule alternately employs the method of warning, "Do *not* as you would *not* be done by," and of exhortation, "Do, as you *would* be done by." For psychological appeal, some versions rely on a minimum of egotistic prudence, while others demand a maximum of altruistic sympathy. It must be admitted that the formula, "Do not to others what if done to you would cause you pain," does not presuppose much more than the mental level of the small child who desists from pinching when it gets pinched in return. More mature insight is assumed in the saying, "No one is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." Of all the versions, however, none commits us as unconditionally as the Upanishads' "He who sees all being in his own self and his own self in all beings," and the Christian injunction, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." They even suggest a true love and a true knowledge of ourselves . . . . Yet the basic formula seems to be universal, and it reappears in an astonishing number of the most revered sayings of our civilization, from St Francis' prayer to Kant's moral imperative and Lincoln's simple political creed: "As I would not be slave, I would not be master."

From INSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY by Erik H. Erikson. W.W. Norton Company, New York. © 1964 by Erik H. Erikson.

Alexandra Tolstoy
GREAT DAUGHTER

THE children of great men are often remarkable for their ordinariness. This was not true of Alexandra Tolstoy, the youngest offspring of the author of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* Miss Tolstoy, who never married, and who died last fall at her home in Valley Cottage, New York, gave proof through her own remarkable life of her famous father's vitality and passionate concern for people in need. She devoted her ninety-five years to assisting first Russians and later immigrants from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Tibet to settle in the U.S.A., of which she herself had become a citizen in 1931. In 1939 she opened the Tolstoy Foundation which has since brought in some 3,500 immigrants a year from all around the world. In the course of these years in America she affected many lives and made many many friends, including Margaret Ruth Thomas, whose high school English class she visited and addressed—in a wonderfully pleasant, unaccented voice—on the subject of her father. What she said to Miss Thomas's class was recorded on tape as follows:

She regarded her father as the last of the great writers of the golden age of Russian literature. "He stood there like an old oak," she said, "—like an old tree with his old tradition." She spoke of his desire to do many things in addition to writing. "Talent is very often versatile," she said. "If a person is talented, he is talented in literature, in art, and in teaching and things like that. Maybe it's the understanding of life, the wideness of conception . . . . There he was, among the children, sometimes playing with them, sometimes very serious, sometimes going for a ride with them or a walk, telling them all about history or geography, giving them knowledge and widening their horizons. The children were so fond of their lessons with him that they didn't want to go home. Along about four or five in the afternoon they would beg him, please, to go for another walk. Then they would take him by the hand and they would walk and he would tell them stories. There was such mutual understanding and such love between them."

She referred to his writing. "If you write, you write," he once told her. "If you want to learn to play the piano or the violin, you can't just start playing. You have to learn, you have to work. It's the same with writing." She told the high school students they probably could have written *War and Peace* better than he had in his first draft of the novel. "It was just poorly written," she said. "But then finally, gradually—it was talent, of course. But he also worked so much on it. In describing the battle between the French and the Russians he had to go to that field, and he studied the field and imagined Napoleon there with the French army and how it flashed, and he came home and said, 'I am going to write such a battle that people have never read anything like it.' And so he did."

People were always asking him where he had gotten his characters. He would be a bit offended by this question, according to Alexandra. "He would say, 'A writer is a creator. He invents characters, he doesn't just copy like a

photographer.' But, as a matter of fact, it wasn't quite so. I remember my aunt—my mother's sister. She was Natasha herself. She sang like a nightingale. She was so pleasant, she loved everybody and everybody loved her, just as in the book. I remember her when she was already old. I never saw her when she was young. But this was Natasha without a doubt . . . . My father would go hunting and she was always his companion. They would go on horseback. Once they were galloping off after a hare or a fox, and my aunt's saddle started to fall. 'Leo, Leo, please stop!' she said. And my father yelled back, 'Wait a minute, wait a minute! Wait until I catch this hare!' When she was old, my father would look at her and say, 'Tanya, why are you always laughing, always so gay? You never think about death, do you?' She said, 'No, why should I?' 'Well,' he said, 'you know one day you're going to die.' And she said, 'Me die? Never!' And she didn't die, because her character is described in *War and Peace.*"

After writing *Anna Karenina,* Miss Tolstoy said, her father became a philosopher. "He started to think and to look into every religion, trying to find the answer to what we live for. He was no longer interested in writing novels. He used to say, 'I don't understand how I could write such rubbish as *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina.* What's interesting in them?' " Miss Tolstoy then looked at her audience of school children and said, "You can't understand this now. Maybe you will when you are seventy or seventy-five."

"And do you know where my father found his answer?" she said. "In the Russian peasant. He came to understand that we must believe in God and serve God and that to serve God what are we to do but serve people. To do something for others. This was what he gave his last days to."

During the last year of his life, when she was seventeen, Alexandra served as his secretary. "His handwriting was very very difficult to read," she said, "Sometimes he would try to decipher it and failed. Sometimes I would sit for an hour or two deciphering his words because those words for me were the most precious."

Alexandra was present at the end, when, fleeing his home in order to spend his final hours with the peasants, he collapsed in a railway station nearby. "The last words he told me," she said, "were, 'Alexandra, do not cry. Do not look at Leo. There are many many people in the world.' "

"That," she added, "was the reason why later on I tried to give all my life to others, remembering what he told me—that there are many, many people in the world."

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One has a sense of marvelous well-being when one sees clearly . . . that life is not limited by this existence. that it is infinite. This instantly alters one's evaluation of all things and emotions, it is as though one stepped out of a cramping prison into the light of God's day, the true light.

—Tolstoy to his wife

JOHN WOOLMAN

by HERRYMON MAURER

AUTHOR of *Essays* and a *Journal* which are among the great classics of inward discovery ("Beyond comparison the sweetest and purest autobiography in the language," says William Ellery Channing), John Woolman was a New Jersey merchandiser, tailor, and lawyer who opened his heart and cut down his business that he might see more clearly the simplicity of Truth. A humble, gentle, yet prophetic Quaker, he was so set against every form of evil that he raised the most eloquent of eighteenth-century voices against slavery and oppression, succeeding—before the American colonies became states—in stamping out slaveowning among the Quakers, then the second most popular religious group in the land.

He was, moreover, the first great American prose writer. Emerson said of his Journal, "I find more wisdom in these pages than in any other book written since the days of the Apostles," while Charles Lamb exhorted, "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart." John Woolman, indeed, may be the best-read little-known writer in English and American history. He sought inconspicuousness for himself, and it has been the wont of Quakers to push neither him nor themselves forward. But he has been the constant companion of people who in youth, middle years, or old age have sought a human and humane hand that turns them toward the simplicity and the power of Truth, toward that Light which shines through confusion to show a way out of it.

For myself, Woolman has now been a constant companion for fifty years, helping me to survive when imprisoned in self, aiding me to turn to what he called Pure Wisdom, and providing fresh penetrations into the reality of God and the life of the spirit. The words here set down are simply an advertisement for his writings. Get them, if you do not already have them, and make John Woolman your companion, for no one else can serve you better. If there is anything in the experience of his readers that is worth sharing, it is first of all John Woolman himself.

"The love of God," he wrote, "is manifested in graciously calling us to come out of that which stands in confusion, but if we give not up those prospects of gain which in the wisdom of the world are open to us—here the mind remains entangled and the shining of the Light of Life into the soul is obstructed. In the love of money and the wisdom of this world, business is proposed: then the urgency of affairs push forward; nor can the mind in this state discern the good and perfect will of God concerning us. Surely the Lord calls to mourning and deep humiliation that in his fear we may be instructed and led safely on through the great difficulties and perplexities in this present age. In an entire subjection

of our wills, the Lord graciously opens a way for his people, where all their wants are bounded by his wisdom."

For Woolman devoted his life to deliverance from inward confusion and to a way of repeatedly giving up and getting over self-will that bore remarkable fruit both in the gentleness of his personal life and in the quietness of his labors in the outward society of his times, for these labors were in fact one with his personal life. He held himself answerable for the evil he saw around him, and he sought to clear his whole being of it, casting out self-will and pride, luxuries, and other products of violence.

He visited the poor. He went to the homes of the well-off, pleading the plight of the wretched and the enslaved, showing equal concern for the well-being of the oppressor and of the oppressed, for—among many openings—he was made aware that the spiritual plight of the former is more grievous than that of the latter. At a time when roads were few and the wilderness dense, he visited repeatedly in the middle Atlantic colonies, where he was born in 1720, travelled again and again throughout the South, went to New England, and journeyed in times of disturbance among the Indians. He found that to love God and one's neighbor is the mightiest of social weapons, and he experienced in the depth of his being the keen and awful sense of being close to God, and the stricken sense of being apart. He took ship for England to labor against the traffic in slaves and there died in 1772.

The spiritual power of his life arose from his willingness to lose his life: "As death comes on our own wills and a new life is formed in us, the heart is purified and prepared to understand clearly, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' In purity of heart the mind is divinely opened to behold the nature of Universal Righteousness, or the righteousness of the kingdom of God. When we love God with all our heart and all our strength, then in this love we love our neighbors as ourselves, and a tenderness of heart is felt toward all people."

A Journal entry for 1740 reads, "As I lived under the cross and simply followed the openings of Truth, my mind from day to day was more enlightened. While I silently ponder on that change that was wrought in me, I find no language equal to it, nor any means to convey to another a clear idea of it. I looked upon the works of God in this visible creation, and an awfulness covered me. My heart was tender and often contrite, and a universal love to my fellow creatures increased in me. This will be understood by such who have trodden in the same path."

The spiritual power of Woolman's life did not arise from a sudden illumination concerning individual salvation. It arose from a repeated experience of Truth, inwardly felt, and an entire readiness to deliver his life wholly over to God—and to deliver it again and again. He sought God constantly in prayer, calling day-in day-out for His help, even weeping for it. But the help he sought was not in realizing himself but in abandoning his self to God. (continued)

"John Woolman Is Dead"

IN A TIME of sickness with the pleurisy I was brought so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy color between the south and the east, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed in with them, and henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any voice I had heard with my ears before, and I believed it was the voice of an angel who spake to the other angels. The words were, JOHN WOOLMAN IS DEAD.

I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ, at which I was grieved for his name to me was precious. Then I was informed that these heathen were told that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ, and they said amongst themselves, "If Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant."

All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery, and in the morning, my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they know who I was . . . . My tongue was often so dry that I could not speak till I had moved it about and gathered some moisture; and as I lay still for a time, at length I felt divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and then I said, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

Then the mystery was opened and I perceived that there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language, JOHN WOOLMAN IS DEAD, meant no more than the death of my own will.

—Journal, 1772

He did not turn to God out of strength but out of weakness, not out of fulfillment but out of humiliation. For him there was no inward rebirth that was not preceded by inward death. He passed through frequent periods of suffering and lowness of spirit, and he cried out, "O Lord my God! The amazing horrors of darkness were gathered around me and covered me all over, and I saw no way to go forth. I felt the depth and extent of the misery of my fellow creatures, separated from the divine harmony; and it was heavier than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it. I lifted up my hand, and I stretched out my arm, but there was none to help me. I looked round about, and was amazed in the depths of misery. O Lord! I remembered that I loved Thee, and I was made quiet in Thy will, and I waited for deliverance from Thee. Thou hadst pity on me when no man could help me. I saw that meekness under suffering was showed unto us in the most affecting example of Thy Son, and Thou was teaching me to follow Him; and I said, 'Thy will, O Father, be done!' "

To be sure, we resist with great labor and pain what seems to be the extinction of our selves; only later does it turn out to be deliverance. Through much of my life, my own resistance was painful and laborious, and it usually took the form of willful misunderstanding of the very Woolman I thought I loved. For a time I persuaded myself that it was necessary only to cogitate about the will of God, determining rationally what it was and then making up my own will to do what I thought God's will was. This was simply a demand that my will be done, and it produced inward turmoil and outward ineffectiveness. At another time, I concluded that individualistic meditation and attachment to the All was my first spiritual need, and I falsely took Woolman as an example of it, overlooking altogether that for him the love of God was inseparable from oneness with other human beings and that, even in his labors against slavery, he worked as part of a congregation of true worshippers. And at other times, I wondered whether Woolman was narrowly credal or unnecessarily moralistic. He was neither.

When he castigated worldiness, he castigated the world of convention, the world in his day that thought first of monetary gain and physical possessions as expressions of self-will, the world that in our day thinks of self-fulfillment and publicity-seeking in good causes, and he saw deliverance from that world as comfort and joy. And he lay down no credal propositions whatever. He spoke well of Thomas a Kempis, read Puritan Jonathan Edwards and Episcopal William Law, and visited the Indians to see "if haply I can receive some instruction from them." He wrote: "There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity." Woolman's concern was not what he could say about God, but simply what God could say to him. Read Woolman and listen!

MEN TOO CAN NURTURE

Happy is the man that hath his
quiver full of them (children).

by LEON GERSTEN

THE GOOD LORD has been kind to me. He has made me a father. And fatherhood has been a blessing, for, besides enjoying the pleasures of parenting, I have grown into a fuller, more complete person.

When my daughter Julie was born, a surge of pride filled my soul. A daughter, a child of love, had come into the world. Pride of creation soon blended with acceptance of the changes this miracle would bring into my life. I recall the first glimpse of my crab-colored Julie in the nursery. The doctor said, "You have a beautiful daughter." She wasn't really beautiful, but she was mine. At last I was a father.

I was spiritually uplifted, transcendent with gratitude. But being a father meant a host of other things I was soon to discover: commitment, involvement, nurturing. I wanted to entwine my being with hers, to make fatherhood and babyhood a joy forever. Above all, I wanted to be more than a traditional breadwinner. What I really desired was being there for her emotionally and psychologically.

So, wisely, I dedicated all my moments in her behalf: in teaching her to walk, in guiding her to grasp all about her, in imparting the beauty of language through

song and story. As much as my wife, I cuddled, fed, caressed, instructed, even spanked. When Julie became seriously ill with an undiagnosed problem, I tended to her like the most dutiful nurse, praying to God for comfort and assistance in His mercy. He came through in this crisis, for Julie miraculously grew well again.

I didn't know it then, but by being physically close, I was investing myself heavily in my child. "He who brings up, not he who begets, is the father." It was bringing her up through the stages of her development that provided my greatest reward. Another bout of serious illness, when she ran a fever of 105 and coughed deliriously with croup, tested my strength. I suffered, but arose to the occasion and saw her through and back to health. I recall wiping her brow when she was a mere three and raising my prayers to heaven.

Fathers don't usually nurture their children in our society. It has always been this way, unfortunately. Men sire children, then go about their business of providing bread, while women stay home to provide the parenting. In more ways than one, I was fighting this pattern, little realizing I was not only investing something of myself in Julie but bestowing a gift upon myself: the human potential that comes from loving and caring. Such fulfillment, I discovered, is God's way of enriching our lives.

I can see, now, as my daughter Julie grows, how dear a person she is, how well she relates to other children, how considerate she is of others' needs. Sometimes I sit back and watch her, as if through a mirror, and see that what I have bestowed has taken root. She is not just my daughter. She is a person in her own right: giving, caring, sharing, loving. I am certain, when the time comes for her to go into the world, she will depart with the capacity to deal with life. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

While Julie initiated me into fatherhood, William, my second-born, enabled me to tread more confidently. When he entered the world, I was ready for him. I held him with surer hands and vowed that he too would receive and know the very best of me. Now I have two to make my existence more meaningful. Two children to nurture are surely the best treasure any father can have. Such treasure should not be taken lightly.

William was an easier child to raise, but there were painful moments when I remained at his side to comfort him. I held him when he fell, clutched him when he was abused by friends, consoled him when the world seemed threatening. That is what a father is for: to make the world less frightening, to assure children that, with love, obstacles can be overcome.

I lavished patience and understanding upon both children, even in later years, when communication broke down, when they were testing their mettle against parental control, when adolescence confused them. As a father, I had to bear the burden of being the target of their testing. At times I was old-fashioned, conservative, unfair, and, according to them, inflexible. But I bore this with equanimity. What better testing-ground than a father?

Soon my children passed from innocence to young adulthood and were emerging as fully formed individuals in their own right. Along with the joy of contributing to their growth came the realization that I was becoming less important. I had to learn to deal with independence and separation. I felt rejected at times and unneeded at others. It took reserves of forebearance to suffer their maturation. But, though they grew more and more separate from me, I always knew they loved me: I felt they knew, deep down, they had a father who had given them something special. I pray they will carry a piece of me into their adult lives.

Parents always ask, "Where do all the years go?" I know now what they mean. Children are our investments in what is good and lasting. What we so willingly give them will, one day, help them endow their own families with solid values. When we refer to those fleeting years, we are really talking about the greatest moments of our lives.

My greatest joy is when my children face me to say, "Dad, I love you." Or, "You're the greatest." Or, "Thanks for all you have done for me." I don't need more. They breathe life into me with their very being. Even after I am gone, I hope they will grasp the real meaning of parenting in the way they raise their own children.

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Rabbi Hillel once was asked by an unbeliever to tell the whole of the Torah while he stood on one foot. I do not know whether he meant to answer the request or to remark on its condition when he said: "What is hateful to yourself, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah and the rest is but commentary." At any rate, he did not add: "Act accordingly." He said: "Go, and learn it."

—Erik H. Erikson

Love

by TI ROACHE

Love took hold
  and grew within
    so deep and strong

That I walk in space
I never knew existed

It is a space complete
All full of treasures known

It is a space incomplete
Waiting to be proved true

Love I think
  must be some combination
    of totality and potential.

Parable of Three Souls

A Story by ERNEST A. SEWARD

ONCE upon a time in heaven there existed three unfulfilled souls. These three souls were sitting in the waiting room of heaven because they were scheduled for a meeting with God. After the passing of about six earth years, an angel of the Lord came to them and said, "The Master will see you now." Hearing this, the three souls humbled themselves and entered the great corridor of the Lord.

When they entered, the Lord communicated to the three souls that they would be sent back to earth. He said to them, "You three must return, for your business on earth is still unfinished."

When the three understood this, a chill ran through them and they shuddered, but they said not a word and made not a move because they were in the presence of the Almighty.

The Master thought again and said, "This time, when you go back to earth, you can go as you see fit. Tell me, each of you, how you would like to return."

The first soul spoke and said, "Lord, when I go back this time, I would like to have a body that is beautiful and strong. I would like people when they see me to say, 'This man was surely blessed.' "

God said, "A beautiful body you may have, for bodies are only toys that I give men. With your strong body you may do many things. You will be able to twist this way and that, you will be able to jump high and run fast. The body will be yours."

But the first soul said, "Along with my body, Lord, I would also like to have money so that I can live in comfort and spend all my time on earth thinking of you without worrying about my next meal."

God answered, saying, "Money and cars and boats and planes—all these things you shall have, for these are only pastimes that I give to men. All I ask of you is that you preserve and take care of your soul, for your soul is mine, and I want only the best of souls."

With a wave of his hand and a glint in his eye, the Lord said, "Return," and the first soul was gone.

Next, God turned his attention to the second soul, which was that of a man who had attained many worldly possessions during his previous stay on earth. God asked him, "How do you wish to return this time?"

The second soul responded: "Lord, just to live will be enough for me. Knowing life is the greatest gift I can receive, just to be alive is all that I want."

God paused in order to give the second soul time to think about what he said. When the second soul said nothing, God said, "These are very commendable things that you have said. I only hope your heart remains as strong as the words you have spoken. Your request shall be as you ask. Life shall be the only

gift you receive."

Before sending him back to earth, the Lord said, "Take care that the dullness of your life does not tarnish the shine of your soul, for in the end you will return to me. All souls are mine, as it is written, and I will keep only the best and strongest of souls."

With these words God turned his back on the second soul, said, "Return," and the second soul was also gone.

Last in the corridor was the third soul, and God now turned to him. The third soul was the soul of a man who in previous lives had been an emperor, a beggar, a poet, and a doctor—many things that men can be. He had viewed life from many positions and had much wisdom.

God said, "Soul, how do you wish to return this time?"

The third soul answered: "Lord, I have lived as a man many times and I know many things that most men do not. In my small and humble wisdom, Lord, I know that life can be no greater anywhere than it is here in Your presence. If it were my choice to make, dear God, I would remain here with You. But I know, my God, that Your sight is clearer than mine and I know that Your wisdom is the well from which all wisdom comes. So, if You say I must return, there is something in me that is lacking, and I shall return with but one request."

"Ask," God said, "and it shall be done."

The third soul said, "My God, the God of all living things, may I return to earth not a man, but a tree?"

"Trees are among the strongest things I have placed on the earth," God said, "and you shall have your request. You will take your nourishment from the mother, which is earth, and your roots will sink deep into her bosom, and at times you will feel that you belong to her. But remember that your soul is mine. Take care of it, for, as it is written, all souls are mine, and I will keep only the strongest of souls."

With all these things understood, God stretched out his arm and said, "Return," and the third soul was gone like the others.

On returning to earth, each of the three souls was born into the station of life which it had requested of God. However, when a soul returns to earth, all memory of any conversation with God is automatically erased. It is the duty of each to attain knowledge of God and of the right way to live, every time it is born.

Twenty-eight earth years passed and all the things requested by the three souls came to pass. The first soul grew into a fine statue of a man. He was the envy of all other men and the dream of all women. He was not only pleasant to look at but also had great athletic ability. This robust soul won gold medals in every event he entered. Needless to say, he, like everyone else, was very pleased with his accomplishments. He became very famous and very rich. Life became so good to this first soul that he could only see material values. He lost all sight of God.

(continued)

Halfway around the world, the second soul was living his life. At first he had handled things well, considering he had been born into poverty. He accepted his poverty and, as many people of his station did, clung tightly to his church. Only one element of his life was a thorn, and this was his ambition. He had worked hard trying to better himself, but no matter what he did, nothing bore fruit for him. After his thirtieth birthday, this second soul began to turn from God to the bottle. During the next five years it would be fair to say he lived in a bottle. This started the ending of his life. He not only lost faith, but began to hate God. He would curse God's name and commit blasphemy of every kind. This second soul lost all direction. His life was coming to a fast and tragic end.

Deep in a forest somewhere in the western hemisphere stood a tall redwood with a very thick trunk and roots that reached deep into the earth. Inside of this huge redwood, deeper than the eye could detect, was the third soul, the same soul that had asked God to be made a tree some seventy years before. During those seventy years this third soul had seen and done many things. He had opened up his branches and made many friends. Being a tree, he had no brain and no eyes, but he could feel. He could feel the presence of God in every rising sun and opened his complete self to the light that was given. He fed and sheltered many creatures of the forest which he loved, and felt their love in return. He neither fought the wind nor hated the elements, but flowed with the changes they brought. When times were hard during droughts, he did not lose faith but waited. While he waited he guided his roots even deeper into the earth. The third soul contained himself and understood that things were always as they should be. As a tree, he lived a long and fruitful life. He had never been happier because now he knew God and God knew him and God was in the tree. But all life on earth must end, and one day the life of the tree came to an end, and the third soul was called back to heaven to the waiting room.

When the third soul entered the waiting room, he found the first and second souls already there. Since it was meant for the three of them to come as a group as they had done before, they had been there for about fifty earth years waiting for him.

The second soul had been there the longest since he had died at the early age of thirty-four. He had drunk so much that he fell one night into the snow and froze to death with a bottle in his hands and evil words on his lips.

While the first and second souls had been waiting, they had tried many ways to set right the lives they had lived. The second soul went so far as to try to get the angels to advise him. But they would not look at nor speak to him. Time does not exist in heaven, but the first and second souls suffered an eternity of fear while they waited.

Finally an angel of the Lord came and said, "God awaits you there."

When they entered the great corridor, it was the same as before. The only change that took place was the constantly changing color of the light that

emanated from God. It was bright and beautiful and no one could look directly at it but at its reflecting glow. This time, when the three souls came into the presence of God, they had already been judged.

God said to the first soul: "You are as a child that needs toys to play with, and when you are playing, you forget about your father that gave them to you. For this you shall return."

Then he said to the second soul: "You are the worse because you knew me and then you hated me and cursed me because you could not have your way. For this you shall surely burn."

Last he said to the third soul: "Even though you did not return to earth in my image, you knew me and were kind to my many creatures and sought to understand my many ways. Yes, I feel that you cared for your soul, which is mine, and that in doing so I grew within you. You shall remain with me."

As it was spoken, so it was done. The first soul returned, the second vanished in a flame, and the third with God remained.

■

Fellowship in Prayer
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LETTERS

Dear Sir:

There seems to be a possibility that the teachings of George Edwin Burnell (some of whose writings have been reprinted in the pages of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER) may become better known in the future. It appears that recently (in October, 1979, to be exact) the *Stanford Observer* announced that the Board of Trustees of Stanford University has established a new endowed professorship, the university's first in religious studies, to be known as "the George Edwin Burnell Professorship." It was funded by a gift from an anonymous donor. This is most unusual. That such a major American university should recognize such a "non-establishment" teaching seems a big step.

—Narcissa Chamberlain, Marblehead, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

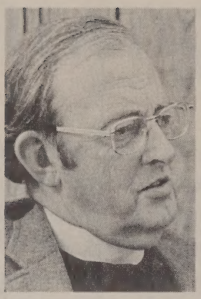
Last December I was the host of Samuel Kamelson, one of the vice presidents of World Vision International, an organization pledged to the task of feeding, clothing, and caring for the hungry and oppressed throughout the world. Dr. Kamelson told me of his experiences in the southern states of India with the Friends Missionary Prayer Band.

This movement began in the mid-fifties. It grew out of a series of vacation Bible schools at which those who had a new vision of the world and its needs had asked, "What can we do? Where do we begin?" and come up with the answer that they could pray and begin where they were, that by their prayers they would learn both what to do and how to do it. They chose the name of "friends"—friends, that is, of prayer—and banded together financially in order to be able to commission those who had the vision to share it with others. The motto they chose was "Go or Send." Prayer was the means by which the bands of friends kept in touch. They also expressed their thoughts in hymns known as "songs of actions" and through the magazines *Challenge* (in Tamil) and *Burnt Oak* (in English).

Perhaps we may see in this account a model of renewal in the life of this and other nations. Many people these days feel that the inner wells of the spirit are drying up, that the vision essential for authentic existence has been obscured, and that we suffer from too many impersonal bureaucracies. I am reminded of Solzhenitzen's criticism, namely, "Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations, there is an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses."

The example of the praying friends may save us from despair. Yes, we may affirm that "the times are out of joint," but we are free to pray and to rejoice in our fellowship through prayer. Our noblest impulses are set free to soar as we engage in prayer together.

—Ernest Gordon, Dean of the Chapel, Princeton University



Pastor Richard Morris

FAITH MULTIPLIED

PASTOR Richard Morris of St Peter's Episcopal Church in Lakewood, Ohio, takes the Bible literally. Mulling over the parable (in Matthew 24: 14-30) about the master who gave talents to his three servants, he decided to apply it to his own congregation. He persuaded several businessmen to put up $2,200 and handed it out, in ten-dollar bills, to two-hundred-and-twenty families.

How to invest the ten dollars became the subject of animated discussion among the families. A number of them decided to hold garage sales. One sold homegrown vegetables, another paintings. One commuter used his ten dollars to buy bus tickets so that he could leave his car in the garage and turned the $86 saved on gas over to the church. Another, handy with boats, invested his share in navigation equipment and realized a $95 profit by giving sailing lessons. One young man bought fertilizer, spread it on his neighbors' lawns, and cut their grass for them for the rest of the summer, earning $90.

All told, the project collected $13,000. "We gave it all away," Pastor Morris says. The sum was divided among a school in Africa, a cancer hospital, the church's mission in Appalachia, and a nursery school.

"The point of the parable," Pastor Morris says, "is not how much each person made with his talents, but that they should be faithful. That's all I was asking."

—Edward R. Walsh

MEDITATION

The Deity said: "That devotee of mine, who hates no being, who is friendly and compassionate, who is free from egoism . . . to whom happiness and misery are alike, who is forgiving, contented, constantly devoted, self-restrained, and firm in his determinations, and whose mind and understanding are devoted to me, he is dear to me. He through whom the world is not agitated, and who is not agitated by the world, who is free from joy and anger and fear and agitation, he too is dear to me. That devotee of mine, who is unconcerned, pure, assiduous, impartial, free from distress, who abandons all actions, he is dear to me . . . . He who is alike to friend and foe, as also in honor and dishonor, who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, who is free from attachments, to whom praise and blame are alike, who is taciturn, and contented with anything whatever that comes, who is homeless, and of a steady mind, and full of devotion, that man is dear to me."

—From The Bhagavad-Gita

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Suggested BOOKS

Following are some of the books used in producing this issue:

BAHA'ULLAH AND THE NEW ERA by J.E. Esslemont, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 60091.

PRAYER IN ACTION, A Growth Experience, by Sr. Miriam Murphy. Write to: P.R.A., 68A Woodland Drive, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. $5.95.

FOUNDATIONS OF TIBETAN MYSTICISM by Lama Anagarika Govinda, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 734 Broadway, New York, New York 10003.

INSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY by Erik H. Erikson, W.W. Norton Company, 500 Fifth Ave., New York, New York 10036.

TWENTY-THREE TALES by Leo Tolstoy, World Classics, Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, New York 10016.

JOHN WOOLMAN'S JOURNAL is available in Everyman's Library and the Harvard Classics as well as the most recent and most scholarly edition of P.P. Moulton, published by Oxford University Press, New York, 1971.

God be in my head,
And in my understanding;
God be in myne eyes,
And in my looking;
God be in my mouth,
And in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
And in my thinking;
God be at my end,
And at my departing.

SARUM MISSAL

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